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IN PROPHECY

(A Recessional)

and

SONNETS

of

THE EUROPEAN WAR

by

Alfred Gordon

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1914
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BY
ALFRED GORDON

MY sincere thanks are due to the Editor of "Beck's Weekly",
for permission to reprint "In Prophecy" and the five
Sonnets of The European War, and to the Editor of "The Uni-
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afy.

*Prince Arthur Apts.
Montreal.
Sept., 1914*

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IN PROPHECY

(*A Recessional.*)

GO D of the Nations, not in vain
The People's voice is raised on high;
Thou shalt not favour lust of gain;
Thou shalt not scorn their bitter cry;
Thou hast been with them—still uphold,
Lord God, the People as of old.

Thou has not rendered them a rod
To be a bruised and broken reed;
Their feet have failed that on them trod;
They have uprisen, tried and freed!
From his high throne Thy strength hath hurled
The last great despot of the world.

They shall be made the pawns no more
Of secret conclaves and intrigue,
Henceforth against the lords of war
The multitudes of peace shall league:
No more shall specious catchwords blind
The sober judgment of man's mind.

They have uprisen who did grope
With staggering steps from long bent knees,
A menace and a giant hope
Feeling with hands by slow degrees:
But now at last doth strike their hour,
Theirs is the kingdom and the power.

Their sceptre is an iron staff;
Their crown is fastened on their head;
Their enemies are made as chaff,
In rout and wild confusion spread;
Their smouldering rage hath flamed at length,
They have put forth their long-crushed strength.

On their revolt Thou hast not frowned,
Let not in vain their fury waste;
Let judgment in their wrath be found,
Stay Thou their heat from vengeful haste;
From Freedom's ramparts let their call
Go forth at measured interval.

God of the Nations, in Thy sight
Let them be free from evil fame;
Let them indifferently do right,
Let not their triumph end in shame:
Thou hast been with them—still uphold,
Lord God, the People as of old!

SONNETS
of
THE EUROPEAN WAR

(i.)

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN
(*To the Kaiser.*)

IN vain on God for succour dost thou call,
Who mad'st thy counsellors of no degree;
Thy blind ambition His will might not see,
Thy sword-won empire by the sword shall fall.
'Tis thou whom God shall smite, thou whited wall,
Who mad'st thy power but feed thy vanity,
And thine own people shall at last be free,
Whilst thou art haled to God's high judgment-hall.

Then in His Presence thou shalt stand alone,
And in His balances thou shalt be weighed;
And thou who didst but boast thee of thy throne
Shalt learn strange silence and shalt be afraid:
And as thou passest to thy doom unknown
Thou shalt look up and see—lo, Bismarck's shade!

(ii.)

LE CHAMP DE MARS

(August 14th, 1914.)

THE roll of distant thunder fills the air,
A flash of lightning rends the lowering sky;
Heaven to earth's warfare seems to make reply
As though on warfare Heaven would war declare,
And with this omen bids all men prepare
To meet the judgment that is throned on high:
Until as rank on rank of men pass by,
The full storm bursts upon the marshalled square.

Could such fit prelude, symbol so august,
For their stern mission man's own mind devise?
Stilled is the cheering of blind battle-lust
By these grave portents of their enterprise:
Yet, O my England, as thy cause is just,
Not thou shalt tremble at these ominous skies.

(iii.)

A “SCRAP OF PAPER”

A “SCRAP OF PAPER,” nothing more, indeed!
A “word,” a mere “word,” mere “neutrality,”
So “often disregarded” (aye, in Germany!)
Did Britain of the hideous “price” take heed?
Had Britain thought where this last step might lead?
“Twas “life and death” to all their “strategy”
To “pass through Belgium”—but let that be—
Of war twixt us, how “terrible,” what need?

Aye, aye! For certain sums of shameful gold,
Or silenced by ignoble fear and sloth,
Nor black nor white should seem now as of old,
And we should make one damnèd grey of both:
But, God be praised that Britain yet doth hold
More dear than life or death her once-sworn oath!

(iv.)

THE ANCIENT GAME

TH E chess-board of the world is set for war:
The kings, that take, but may not taken be;
The queens, unprized in this hostility;
The fortress-castles in the corners four;
The cringing bishops, state-bound to the core;
The inglorious knights of trade and usury—
But at the front of this great panoply
The pawns are ranged to pay the sordid score.

By tortuous juggling, in the name of right,
The marshalled forces to the field are led;
But as they grapple in the sanguine fight,
The arch-intriguers' blood is never shed,
The pieces on the board stand, black and white—
The pawns lie scattered, black and white—both red!

(v.)

WATERLOO

1914

(To the Kaiser)

WHAT auguries and portents dost thou see,
As now thine hosts to Waterloo draw near?
What spirits in the deepening night appear,
Awaked from slumber through a century?
Doth Blücher's shade rise up and say to thee
That French by Germans first were routed here,
And those dire happenings of that fateful year
Yet once again in this our day shall be?

If so thou dreamest, 'tis thine awful pride
Hath wrought the vision to thine overthrow;
Insensate power hath sight to thee denied,
And warped thy judgment so thou should'st not know—
That here nor French nor Germans fought and died,
But outraged Freedom laid a despot low!

THE SACRIFICE

THE bread and wine are turned to flesh and blood,
The scent of incense steals upon the air,
And, bowed in silence by the altar there,
The hungry eyes of men cry out for food.
High, steadfast souls that once with Love had stood
Forget vain hope in ways of fruitless prayer,
And age-sought Truth's lure-hazèd lovers stare
With listless gaze upon the holy rood.

Christ's kingdom falls, by Mammon overthrown;
Above the town men's souls go up in smoke;
Their flesh and blood are frozen into stone;
Their rude limbs bowed by such an iron yoke
That even this dull people will not groan,
But rise and break their rulers at one stroke.

“ AND THERE WAS NO MORE SEA ”

A CRY of lamentation fills the air;
The world is bowed beneath Death's shadowing
wings;
Faith's own lips fail, and in Faith's ear there rings
The old, old question through her rote-wrought prayer;
Her words go wandering, and she, kneeling there,
To some frail spar of her great shipwreck clings:
What salvage shall be of her voyagings,
So swiftly ended in such great despair?

“Lie still, O trembling soul, lie still, I say:
Arraign Me not, nor justify thou Me;
To all My Will let all thy life be Yea,
O Children of Mine own Eternity.
Lie still, lie still, for thou shalt know that day
When there shall be no death and no more sea.”

A FALLEN LEADER

BECAUSE my words and deeds divide,
My cry goes echoing down the wind:
Shall blindness be to blindness guide,
And both not double error find?

From reef and shoal the single light
Burns danger to the driving bark,
And may no spirit in the night
Flash fires of warning from the dark?

All vessels wrecked and broken here,
Where surf-spray spins like frozen snow,
Sailed once where skies and seas are clear—
As even I not long ago.

The strange sea's strange eternal grave
Folds round its sleepers till the end,
And scarce a mast shall mark the wave
That drowned an enemy or friend.

Yet none who knew a night in June,
And saw the rose-set evening-star,
Or heard the summer waters' tune,
Forget where peace and quiet are.

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